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How the Teacher came for Tatchnee.

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How the Teacher Came for Tatchnee.

IT was the last day of August, hot, dusty—a thirsty day for the poor, brown grass and the motionless trees, which seemed to beg for the air and moisture that the burning sky denied.

School was to begin on the morrow, and among other applicants for admission was Tatchnee. The mite was resplendent in a buckskin suit, heavy with beads and jingling with bells. As I looked at her, I was convinced that even buckskin and sleigh-bells (in August) could be forgiven the owner of such a pair of eyes. They were so earnest and fearless, and yet so jolly and bright that the sturdy young person who owned them walked right into our hearts.

I saw Mr. Hamlin struggling with the problem which troubled that famous old woman who lived in a shoe, and longing against his better judgment to take her. However, there was an older girl who really seemed to be more needy. "The little one will probably come again; the older girl never will if we send her away," so that settled the question.

Mr. Hamlin explained through the interpreter, kindly and regretfully, that Tatchnee would have to come another year, that just now there

was not room for her. The refusal was received, Indian-like, with very little change of countenance.

Mr. Hamlin sighed, "I did hope we could open with a larger dormitory, but the Board is right—we must wait our turn. If the friends at home only knew how hard it is to turn them away!"

Then he said to me: "Take them through the house, Miss Herron, it may interest them;" adding, earnestly, "Don't miss your opportunity."

I took mother and child through the house, showing this and that, and by means of signs and my very limited Indian vocabulary getting more information about our visitors. Tatchnee was seven years old, an only child, and evidently held the balance of family power. The idea of her coming to school originated, we imagined, in her own small brain, and I think the maternal heart rejoiced over our refusal to keep her.

After making our round, we stepped into the little room, just large enough for three beds, which served for hospital. It looked so cool and inviting that hot August day, with the white curtains and beds. One of our girls, recovering from a few days' illness, sat by the window in a big easy-chair, with two or three picture-books for company. She and the mite were evidently old friends, so I left them together while I went off with the mother to find the interpreter and make the most of my "opportunity."

When we returned to the children, Carrie said, "Miss Herron, she want to stay." Evidently the

little maid had set her heart on staying with us, and I appreciated it to such an extent that I picked her up, buckskin, bells, dirt, and all, and gave her a good hug.

We sat down and had a little talk, consisting of very simple English on my part and very earnest interpretation on Carrie's, the mite receiving it all with sundry nods and shakes of the head, and eyes which atoned for any lack of words.

Just opposite the window hung a picture of Jesus blessing the children, and we told her of the "Good Teacher" who loves the little ones and makes room in His house for all who want to go to Him.

"Tell her, Carrie," I said, "to ask Him and He will make a way for her to learn of Him." And then I promised that if the far-away friends would only build us a larger house, she should surely come to school another year.

I stood on the porch next morning and waved a good-bye to Tatchnee, who rode by with every bell jingling and her buckskin fringes flying in the breeze. Behind her rode mother and father with heavily-laden ponies. I watched the little cavalcade and the queer, zigzag trail of the dragging tent-poles, wondering when we would see them again and praying that some word spoken might be blessed in His service.

Our dormitory grew no larger during the winter and spring, but in vacation a teacher from Hampton carried off some of our older pupils, and with the first vacancy we thought of Tatchnee.

In August, Mr. Hamlin sent me out in charge of a party of the older students to do some camp work and gather up pupils for the fall. We went Indian-fashion, camping at night in our tepees, and often having our evening prayers by moonlight and starlight.

We heard that the band to which Tatchnee's father belonged was camping near the river, in the cañon which the Indians call the "Three Brothers," from the three great trees which mark its location. The third day out we struck the trail, quite near our destination, and by sunset the smoke-shaded tepees appeared here and there through the trees.

The mountains were purple in the distance, the shadows lost themselves in the twilight, and the prairie grass swept in soft waves to our feet as it yielded to the evening breeze.

We stopped for a moment in the beautiful hush, and, as we waited, there rang out that cry, that exceeding bitter cry, which marks the Indian mourner. Month after month, following the death of a child, the mother goes aside to mourn for the lost trea ure, cutting herself with knife, beating her breast, and tearing her hair in hopeless grief. Oh! that wail, how it hurts one's heart! The mother trying to pierce the darkness of that great Unknown into which her child has gone.

The spell of silence and peace was broken. We hurried on, and while I unpacked our belongings and the boys put up our tepees, Carrie went to

find our little girl. She stayed until dark, then came back with the poor mother. One glance at her hand and arm told the story; the great scars above the elbow had hardly healed, and the poor mutilated hand told the double tale of loss and cruel custom.

The tears poured down her cheeks as she talked rapidly to Carrie, turning now and then to me with gestures so expressive that I could almost read the story of her grief in them. In the early winter the little one had taken cold and the cough which followed had given her no rest night or day. "She say, Miss Herron," interpreted Carrie, "Tatchnee talk all time 'bout school, and ask all time 'Will teacher come now?' and she say medicine rattle no good and hurt her head, and when the days get so hot and the water from the river so bad, she talk and talk 'bout the little white house and want to lie in the good white bed, and look at the picture and drink cool water. And then she say, 'No, they got no place for Tatchnee.' And then she talk to man in the picture, and ask him to send teacher to take Tatchnee.

"Then one night she very bad sick and sit right up and say, 'Teacher coming, take Tatchnee, heap place now for Tatchnee,' and she look so glad and take hold her mother and say, 'You go, too,' and then she go to sleep and say, 'You no more.'"

And so the Teacher came for Tatchnee.

M. J. ADAMS, in *Over Sea and Land.*

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